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Contreras

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(54) **PET WASTE COLLECTOR**

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E01H 1/12 (2006.01)

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USPC 294/1.4, 1.3, 1.5; 248/100, 101
See application file for complete search history.

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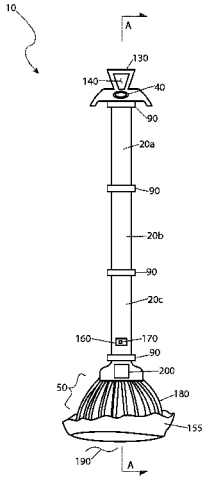
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A pet waste collector including a shaft including a first end and a second end, a clamp mechanism connected to the second end of the shaft, and an actuator mechanism operably connected to the clamp mechanism, the actuator mechanism be disposed at the first end of the shaft. The clamp mechanism is movable between an open position and a closed position. The clamp mechanism is configured to retain a bag in the open position. The clamp mechanism moves to the closed position in response to actuation of the actuator mechanism to capture pet waste within the bag.

16 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets



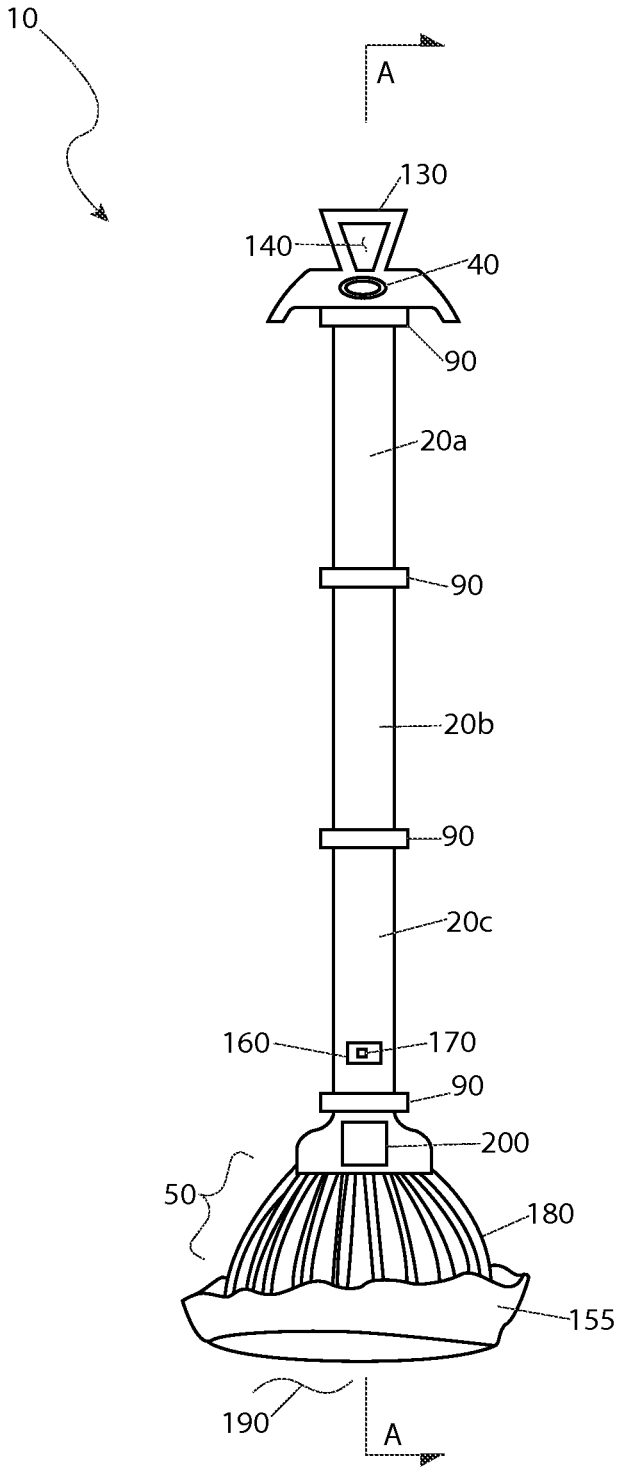


Fig. 1

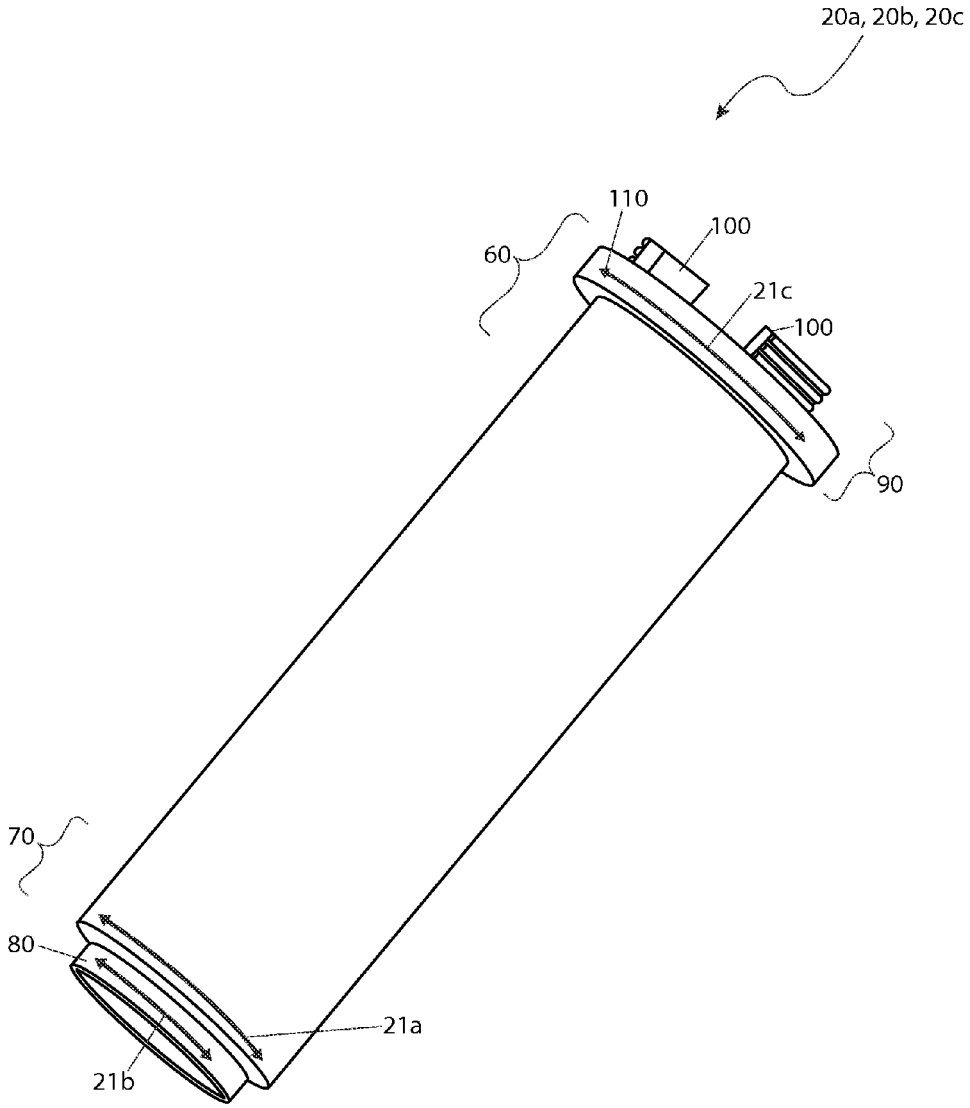
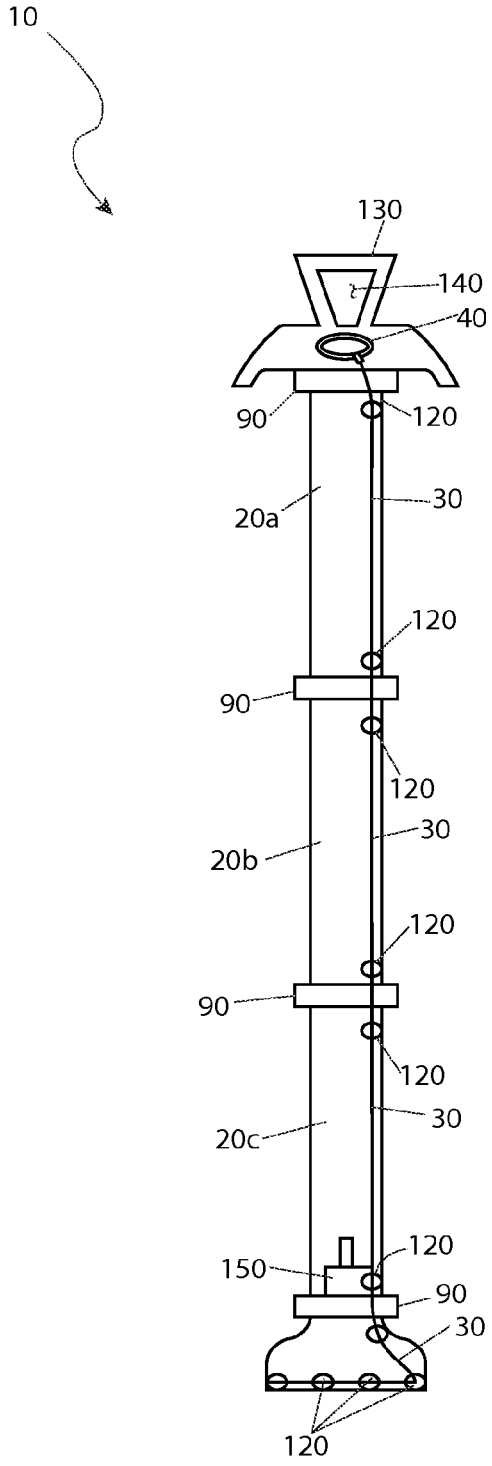


Fig. 2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20a
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Fig. 3

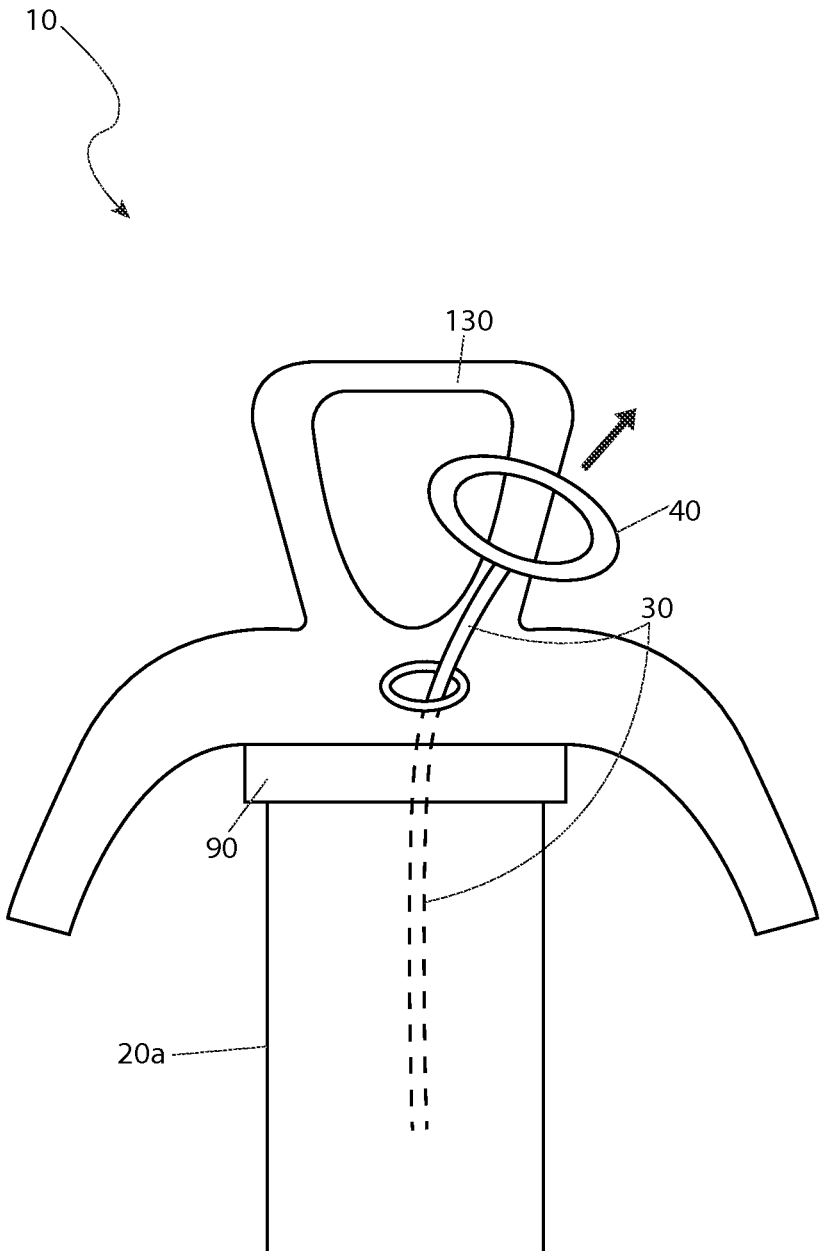

Fig. 4

PET WASTE COLLECTOR

RELATED APPLICATIONS

The present invention was first described in and claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/866,192, filed Aug. 15, 2013, the entire disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to pet waste collectors and, more particularly, to a pet waste collector that utilizes disposable bags.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Recent history has seen a proliferation of dogs being adopted as household pets. Pets provide many benefits to our lives; yet, every benefit has an associated duty. Duties associated with pets include caring for them, spending time with them, feeding them, walking them, and, of course, cleaning up after them.

The days of tying up the dog to a post and providing a doghouse in the back yard are over, which is seen, at the very least as socially unacceptable and at most inhumane treatment. Consequently, most pets live in the house with us and must be walked throughout the neighborhood for exercise.

As pets are no longer confined to the back yard, cleaning up after them has taken on a heightened sense of duty. Laws, and the enforcement of them, have become strict regarding cleaning up after pets. This requires having something portable to bring with us during walks that can be used to collect pet waste and transport it back to the home.

Pet waste collectors do exist, but they tend to be heavy and unwieldy. Furthermore, the use of them requires one to clean the fecal matter from the apparatus after use. For this reason pet owners tend to opt for plastic bags as a source of waste collection. The use of bags, however, requires one to kneel down close to the waste, use one's hand as the means to entrain the waste, and carry the entrained waste within the bag back to the home.

Accordingly, there exists a need for a means by which the functionality of a pet waste collector and the ease and convenience of a waste bag can be exploited in one device.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The inventor has recognized the aforementioned inherent problems and lack in the art and observed that there is a need for an improved pet waste collector. The development of the present invention, which will be described in greater detail herein, substantially departs from conventional solutions to fulfill this need.

In one (1) embodiment, the disclosed pet waste collector including a shaft including a first end and a second end, a clamp mechanism connected to the second end of the shaft, and an actuator mechanism operably connected to the clamp mechanism, the actuator mechanism be disposed at the first end of the shaft. The clamp mechanism is movable between an open position and a closed position. The clamp mechanism is configured to retain a bag in the open position. The clamp mechanism moves to the closed position in response to actuation of the actuator mechanism to capture pet waste within the bag.

In another embodiment, the disclosed pet waste collector including a plurality of tubes, the plurality of tubes being releasably connected to form a shaft including a first end and a second end, a clamp mechanism connected to a lowermost tube of the plurality of tubes at the second end of the shaft, the clamp mechanism including a flexible framework defining a mouth configured to retain a bag, a flexible cord extending through the plurality of tubes from the first end of the shaft to the second end of the shaft, the cord including a first end and a second end, the second end connected to the mouth of the framework of the clamp mechanism, an actuator mechanism connected to the first end of the cord, a spool assembly disposed within the lowermost tube at the second end of the shaft, the spool assembly including a plurality of the bags wound therearound, and a door hingedly connected to the lowermost tube at the second end of the shaft and covering an opening into the lowermost tube. The flexible framework of the clamp mechanism is biased in an open position. Actuation of the actuator mechanism exerts a tensile force upon the mouth of the flexible framework of the clamp mechanism to move the flexible framework of the clamp mechanism to a closed position to capture pet waste within the bag. The bag is removed from within flexible framework of the clamp mechanism through the opening.

Furthermore, the described features and advantages of the disclosure may be combined in various manners and embodiments as one skilled in the relevant art will recognize. The disclosure can be practiced without one or more of the features and advantages described in a particular embodiment.

Further advantages of the present disclosure will become apparent from a consideration of the drawings and ensuing description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The advantages and features of the present disclosure will become better understood with reference to the following more detailed description and claims taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which like elements are identified with like symbols, and in which:

FIG. **1** is a front elevational view of the disclosed pet waste collector, according to one embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **2** is a perspective view of the tube of the pet waste collector;

FIG. **3** is a cross sectional view of the pet waste collector taken along section line A-A of FIG. **1**; and,

FIG. **4** an enlarged front elevational view the handle of the pet waste collector.

DESCRIPTIVE KEY

10 pet waste collector
15 shaft
20*a* first tube
20*b* second tube
20*c* third tube
21*a* first curvature
21*b* second curvature
21*c* third curvature
30 cord
40 actuator mechanism
50 clamp mechanism
60 first end
70 second end
80 stripped surface
90 locking coupling
100 flange
110 locking mechanism

120 eyelet
130 handle
140 aperture
150 spool assembly
155 waste bag
160 hinged door
170 latch
180 framework
190 mouth
200 port

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with the invention, the best mode is presented in terms of a one or more of the disclosed embodiments, herein depicted within FIGS. **1** through **4**. However, the disclosure is not limited to a single described embodiment and a person skilled in the art will appreciate that many other embodiments are possible without deviating from the basic concept of the disclosure and that any such work around will also fall under its scope.

Further, those skilled in the art will recognize that other styles and configurations can be incorporated into the teachings of the present disclosure, and that the example configurations shown and described herein are for the purpose of clarity and disclosure and not by way of limitation.

As used herein, the singular terms "a", "an", and "the" do not denote a limitation of quantity, but rather denote the presence of at least one (1), as well as a plurality of, the referenced items, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise.

As used herein, the terms "first", "second", "third", etc. are used as labels to describe various elements, features, and/or components, and are not intended to impose ordinal, positional, or hierarchical requirements on the referenced items, unless other indicated. For example, such terms may be used to distinguish one (1) element from another element.

As used herein, relative terms such as "front", "rear", "left", "right", "top", "bottom", "below", "above", "upper", "lower", "horizontal", or "vertical" are used to describe a relationship of one (1) element, feature and/or region to another element, feature and/or region as illustrated in the figures.

Referring to FIGS. **1-4**, disclosing a hand-held pet waste collector (herein described as the "device") **10**, where like reference numerals represent similar or like parts. The device **10** includes a shaft **15** equipped with a spool assembly **150** to feed and position a waste bag **155** around a clamp mechanism **50**. In use, a user positions a deployed bag **155** over top of fecal matter **210**. The clamp mechanism **50** then collapses the bag **155** around the fecal matter (not shown) allowing for hands-free disposal thereof.

Referring to FIG. **1**, the device **10** includes the shaft **15**. In one (1) embodiment, as illustrated in FIG. **1**, the shaft **15** includes three (3) hollow sections of tube **20** (illustrated individually as a first tube **20***a*, a second tube **20***b*, and a third tube **20***c*). The device **10** includes a length of cord **30** (FIG. **3**), an actuator mechanism **40**, and the clamp mechanism **50**.

Each hollow tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c* can be made from a light weight, rigid polymer material and has a cylindrical shape. However, it is understood that other materials and configurations may be utilized without deviating from the teachings of the present disclosure and, as such, should not be interpreted as a limiting factor. The hollow construction of each tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c* is a beneficial feature of the device **10** because it facilitates the housing of internal components of the device **10**, enables movement of each component when manipulated, and allows the device **10** to be assembled and disassembled easily and efficiently.

Referring to FIG. **2**, each tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c* is configured to have a first end **60** and a second end **70**. In an embodiment, each tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c* is cylindrical and has a first degree of curvature **21***a* for its inner circumference and outer circumference. Each second end **70** of each tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c* is configured to have a stripped surface **80** about an outer surface. Each outer circumference of each stripped surface **80** exhibits a second degree of curvature **21***b*. An outer diameter of each stripped surface **80** is less than that of an inner diameter of each first end **60** so that each second end **70** of a tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c* is able to slidably insert into each first end **60** of a different tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c*.

Each first end **60** of each tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c* includes a locking coupling **90** affixed to an outer perimeter edge. Each locking coupling **90** includes at least two (2) flanges **100** and a locking mechanism **110**. However, it is understood that other types or configurations of locking coupling **90** may be utilized without deviating from the teachings of the present disclosure and, as such, should not be interpreted as a limiting factor.

The flanges **100** are a cylindrical extension of each first end **60** of each tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c*, having a third degree of curvature **21***c* for its inner surface, but an inner diameter slightly greater than that of an outer diameter of each first end **60**. As a second end **70** of an inserting tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c* is inserted into a first end **60** of a receiving tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c*, each flange **100** of the locking coupling **90** of the first end **60** slidably receives an outer surface of the inserting tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c* that is not stripped.

The locking mechanism **110** of each locking coupling **90** is positioned around an outer surface of each flange **70**. When actuated, the locking mechanism **110** advances each flange **100** in a centripetal direction to securely fasten two (2) tubes **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c* together. The flange **100**, as best illustrated in FIG. **2**, takes the form of a threaded fingered flange. A locking mechanism **110** in the form of a threaded locking nut acts upon the flanges **100** to advance each flange **100** in a centripetal direction.

To assemble the device **10**, a second end **70** of one (1) tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c* is inserted into a first end **60** of another tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c* by way of the stripped surface **80** of the second end **70** of the inserting tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c*. The flange **100** of the receiving tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c* also receives an outer surface of the inserting tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c*. The locking coupling **90** of the receiving tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c* is actuated to make a secure fit between the two (2) tubes **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c*. Actuating the locking coupling **90** in an opposite direction enables the user to detach the two (2) tubes **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c* for disassembly of the device **10**.

Referring to FIG. **3**, an inside surface of each tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c* is provided with a plurality of eyelets **120**. These eyelets **120** serve as retention guides for the cord **30**. The cord **30** can be a length of cable or string that is both flexible and able to transfer linear tensile forces. The flexibility of the cord **30** is important because the cord **30** remains attached to the inner surface of each tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c*, whether the device **10** is assembled or disassembled. The cord **30** extends the length of the device **10** and is fastened to an inner surface of each tube **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c* via the eyelets **120** by being routed therethrough. One (1) end of the cord **30** is placed into mechanical connection with the actuator mechanism **40**, whereas an opposite end is placed into mechanical connection with the clamp mechanism **50**.

The actuator mechanism **40** is attached to a handle **130** of the device **10**. The handle **130** includes an additional integral stripped surface **80** that is secured to the first end **60** of the first tube **20***a*. The actuator mechanism **40** provides a mechanism that serves to manipulate the clamp mechanism **50** when displaced. An example embodiment of the actuator **40** is illustrated in FIG. **3** as being a pull-ring device being affixed to an end of the cord **30**. However it is understood that other means such as, but not limited to; a trigger, a push-button member, or the like, may be utilized with equal benefit and should not be interpreted as a limiting factor.

The cord **30** is run from the actuator mechanism **40** and through each eyelet **120** of the first tube **20***a*. The subsequent second **20***b* and third **20***c* tubes are coupled to each other via the locking couplings **90** as the cord **30** is routed through each eyelet **120** of each tube **20***b*, **20***c*. A second end **70** of the third tube **20***c* is connected to the clamp mechanism **50** via a locking coupling **90** disposed on the clamp mechanism **50**. The cord **30** is placed into mechanical connection with the clamp mechanism **50**. The actuator mechanism **40** operates as a lever that transfers linear motion into the cord **30**, which in turn transfers that motion to the clamp mechanism **50** to manipulate the clamp mechanism **50**. The handle **130** can include an aperture **140** to enable hanging the device **10** while stowing the device **10**.

The third tube **20***c* includes a spool assembly **150**. The spool assembly **150** is positioned at terminus of the third tube **20***c* and situated at an inner surface of the third tube **20***c*. The spool assembly **150** holds a roll of waste bags **155** and positions each bag for readied use in the clamp mechanism **50** of the device **10**.

The third tube **20** includes a hinged door **160** (FIG. **1**) to contain and provide access to the spool assembly **150** to replenish the spool assembly **150** with a fresh roll of waste bags **155** when the need arises. The hinged door **160** includes a latch **170** (FIG. **1**) to secure the door **160** in a closed position.

The clamp mechanism **50** includes a locking coupling **90** to facilitate removable attachment of the clamp mechanism **50** to the second end **70** of the third tube **20***c*. The clamp mechanism **50** includes a flexible framework **180** (FIG. **1**), the peripheral of which creates a generally hemispherical shape having a subjacent circular mouth **190**. A perimeter edge of the framework **180** is provided with a plurality of eyelets **120** (FIG. **3**), through which the cord **30** is routed. The configuration of the clamp mechanism **50** and cord **30** is such that as a user pulls upon the actuator mechanism **40**, the tensile forces imposed on the cord **30** collapses the perimeter edge of the framework **180** in a central direction.

Referring to FIG. **1**, in preparing the device **10**, a waste bag **155** is extracted from the hinged door **160** and is manually inserted into the framework **180** of the clamp mechanism **50** and around edges of the mouth **190** such that the mouth of the bag **155** protrudes horizontally outwardly from the mouth **190**. As the actuator mechanism **40** is manipulated to advance the clamp mechanism **50** in a centripetal motion, the waste bag **155** is also forced into a centripetal motion.

A user positions the mouth **190** of the clamp mechanism **50**, with a waste bag **155** being positioned as described above, over the fecal matter of an animal. Manipulating the actuator mechanism **40** advances the framework **180** and the waste bag **155** in a centripetal motion, entraining the fecal matter **210** within the waste bag **155**. An upper surface of the clamp mechanism **50** includes a port **200**. The port **200** allows a user to retrieve the waste bag **155** containing the entrained fecal matter from the clamp mechanism **50**. A user's fingers are inserted into the port **200** to grasp the waste bag **155** and pull it through the port **200**. A user's fingers maintain contact with an outside surface of the waste bag **155** so as to obviate inadvertent contact with the fecal matter. The port **200** is to be large enough to facilitate common size fecal matter associated with an animal, such as a dog.

Those skilled in the art will recognize that other styles and configurations of the disclosed device **10** can be easily incorporated into the teachings of the present disclosure, and only particular embodiments have been shown and described for purposes of clarity and disclosure and not by way of limitation of scope.

The disclosed embodiments of the device **10** can be utilized by the common user in a simple and effortless manner with little or no training. After initial purchase or acquisition of the device **10** it would be installed and utilized as illustrated in FIG. **1**.

Referring to FIGS. **1-4**, one embodiment of the disclosed method for preparing the device **10** for use includes the following steps: 1). acquiring the device **10**; 2). assembling the shaft **15** by coupling a first end **60** of a first tube **20***a* to the stripped surface **80** of the actuator mechanism **40**, coupling the second end **70** of the first tube **20***a* with a first end **60** of a second tube **20***b*, coupling the second end **70** of the second tube **20***b* with a first end **60** of a third tube **20***c*, and coupling the second end **70** of the third tube **20***c* with the locking coupling **90** of the clamp mechanism **50**; 3). securing each piece together with the locking couplings **90**; opening the hinged door **160** using the latch **170**; 4). inserting a roll of waste bags **155** onto the spool assembly **150**; and 5). closing the hinged door **160** and securing it shut with the latch **170**. The device **10** is now ready for use.

Referring to FIGS. **1-4**, one embodiment of the disclosed method for utilizing the device **10** includes the following steps: 1). extracting a waste bag **155** from the hinged door **160**; 2). inserting the waste bag **155** manually up into the framework **180** of the clamp mechanism **50** and around edges of the mouth **190**; 3). positioning the mouth **190** of the clamp mechanism **50** and the opening of the waste bag **155** over the fecal matter of an animal; 4). manipulating the actuator mechanism **40** to advance the framework **180** and the waste bag **155** in a centripetal motion; 5). allowing the waste bag **155** to entrain the fecal matter **210** within; 6). retrieving the waste bag **155** containing the entrained fecal matter by inserting fingers into the port **200** to grasp the waste bag **155**; 7). pulling the waste bag **155** outwardly through the port **200**; 8). disassembling the device **10** by detaching the tubes **20***a*, **20***b*, **20***c* of the shaft **15** from each other in reverse order of the assembly steps described above; and, 9). stowing the device **10** away, or keeping is assembled and hanging it upon a hook or similar appendage using the aperture **140**.

The foregoing descriptions of specific embodiments have been presented for purposes of illustration and description. They are not intended to be exhaustive or to limit to the precise forms disclosed and many modifications and variations are possible in light of the above teachings. The embodiments were chosen and described in order to best explain principles and practical application to enable others skilled in the art to best utilize the various embodiments with various modifications as are suited to the particular use contemplated.

What is claimed is:

1. A pet waste collector comprising:

a shaft having a first end and a second end, said shaft comprising a releasably interconnected plurality of tubes, each tube of said plurality of tubes comprising a plurality of locking flanges extending from an end thereof;

a locking mechanism movable over said plurality of locking flanges of said each tube to compress said plurality of locking flanges inwardly and connect said plurality of tubes end to end;

a clamp mechanism connected to said second end of said shaft; and,

an actuator mechanism operably connected to said clamp mechanism, said actuator mechanism be disposed at said first end of said shaft;

wherein said clamp mechanism is movable between an open position and a closed position;

wherein said clamp mechanism is configured to retain a bag in said open position; and,

wherein said clamp mechanism moves to said closed position in response to actuation of said actuator mechanism to capture pet waste within said bag.

2. The pet waste collector of claim **1**, wherein said shaft further comprises a handle connected to said first end; wherein said actuator mechanism is adjacent to said handle.

3. The pet waste collector of claim **1**, wherein each tube of said plurality of tubes comprises:

a first end; and,

a second end opposite said first end;

wherein said second end of a first tube is insertably connected within said first end of a second tube.

4. The pet waste collector of claim **3**,

wherein said locking mechanism of said second tube secures said second end of said first tube within said first end of said second tube when said second end of said first tube is inserted within said first end of said second tube.

5. The pet waste collector of claim **3**,

wherein said plurality of locking flanges of said second tube engage said second end of said first tube within said first end of said second tube when said second end of said first tube is inserted within said first end of said second tube; and,

wherein said locking mechanism moves over said plurality of locking flanges to compress said plurality of locking flanges around said second end of said first tube.

6. The pet waste collector of claim **1**, wherein said clamp mechanism comprises a flexible framework defining a mouth; and wherein an edge of said bag is folded over said mouth.

7. The pet waste collector of claim **1**, further comprising a flexible cord interconnected between said actuator mechanism and said clamp mechanism; wherein a tensile force applied to said cord by said actuator mechanism is transferred to said clamp mechanism to move said clamp mechanism to said closed position.

8. The pet waste collector of claim **7**, wherein said actuator mechanism is a pull ring connected to an end of said cord at said first end of said shaft.

9. The pet waste collector of claim **7**, wherein said cord extends through said shaft from said second end to said first end; and wherein said cord is movably connected to an inner surface of said shaft.

10. The pet waste collector of claim **1**, further comprising a spool assembly disposed within said shaft at said second end; wherein said spool assembly comprises a plurality of bags wound therearound.

11. The pet waste collector of claim **1**, further comprising a door hingedly connected to said shaft and covering an opening into said shaft; wherein said bag is removed from within said shaft through said opening.

12. A pet waste collector comprising:

a plurality of tubes, said plurality of tubes being releasably connected to form a shaft comprising a first end and a second end, each tube of said plurality of tubes comprising a plurality of locking flanges extending from an end thereof;

a locking mechanism movable over said plurality of locking flanges of said each tube to compress said plurality of locking flanges inwardly and connect said plurality of tubes end to end;

a clamp mechanism connected to a lowermost tube of said plurality of tubes at said second end of said shaft, said clamp mechanism comprising a flexible framework defining a mouth configured to retain a bag;

a flexible cord extending through said plurality of tubes from said first end of said shaft to said second end of said shaft, said cord comprising a first end and a second end, said second end connected to said mouth of said framework of said clamp mechanism;

an actuator mechanism connected to said first end of said cord;

a spool assembly disposed within said lowermost tube at said second end of said shaft, said spool assembly comprising a plurality of said bags wound therearound; and,

a door hingedly connected to said lowermost tube at said second end of said shaft and covering an opening into said lowermost tube;

wherein said flexible framework of said clamp mechanism is biased in an open position;

wherein actuation of said actuator mechanism exerts a tensile force upon said mouth of said flexible framework of said clamp mechanism to move said flexible framework of said clamp mechanism to a closed position to capture pet waste within said bag; and,

wherein said bag is removed from within said lowermost tube through said opening.

13. The pet waste collector of claim **12**, wherein said shaft further comprises a handle connected to an uppermost tube of said plurality of tubes at said first end of said shaft; and wherein said actuator mechanism is adjacent to said handle.

14. The pet waste collector of claim **13**, further comprising a plurality of locking couplings connecting said handle to said uppermost tube, and said clamp mechanism to said lowermost tube.

15. The pet waste collector of claim **13**, wherein said locking mechanism threadingly engages over said plurality of locking flanges to compress said plurality of locking flanges inwardly.

16. The pet waste collector of claim **15**, wherein said cord is movably connected to an inner surface of said each tube of said plurality of tubes.

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